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**Testimony of Patricia J Wrice**  
**Executive Director**  
**Low Income Residential Utility Rate Hearing**  
**January 11, 2011**

Good afternoon members of the Energy and Technology, Appropriations, and Human Services Committees. My name is Patricia Wrice, and I am the executive director of Operation Fuel. I want to thank all of the committee members and staff for conducting this informational hearing on a Low Income Residential Utility Rate

Also, thank you for allocating funding last year to Operation Fuel. With that funding and privately raised dollars, Operation Fuel provided \$2,135,327 in energy assistance to over 6,800 residents in the State of Connecticut. This year will be very difficult for us to provide the same level of assistance.

Energy affordability continues to elude Connecticut's most vulnerable households. The gap between what households can afford to pay and their actual energy costs, places an unfair burden on those who could least afford it. As a result, more families are at risk of having to make choices between adequate nutrition, medical care, housing, and other basic necessities in order to pay home energy bills.

Today Operation Fuel released its 2010 Home Energy Affordability Gap report, I'm pleased to report that compared to last year, the gap has moved from \$585 million to \$480 million. That would be good news if Connecticut was on the brink of closing the

affordability hole. When you simply move from \$585 million to \$480 million, this is not a cause for celebration. On average, that Gap is still more than \$2,000 per household.

Many low income residents forced to juggle their energy payments- face the loss of utility service when the winter protection program ends. This does not have to be the case if Connecticut had Low Income Residential Utility Rates that other states such as New Hampshire, New Jersey, and Ohio have adopted. When deregulation passed in Maryland, appropriate action was taken to protect Maryland's most vulnerable residents.

These programs have been operating for several years and evaluations have shown that they are effective and do work. They cost money and we recognize that someone has to pay the bill, but I believe the costs are minimal and are necessary in order to ensure low-income families don't have to make difficult choices. The adoption of a Low Income rate would allow Connecticut to stretch our federal energy assistance dollars further.

We are requesting the adoption of a stand alone bill that allows the Department of Public Utility Control to conduct a proceeding regarding the development of Low Income Residential Rates for service provided by gas and electric distribution companies.

I am a member of the Low Income Energy Advisory Board. I currently chair the DPUC Subcommittee of the Low Income Energy Advisory Board (LIEAB). LIEAB supports the passage of a Low Income Residential Rate Program.

Thank you for your support. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.